

Communities of the Word

STORIES OF THE CHICAGO PROVINCE



THE EPWORTH STORY, 1931 – 2012

Rev. Walter Bunofsky et al.



ST. PAUL'S MISSION HOUSE

At the far north end of the Divine Word College Seminary campus, along a small section of a walkway wending its way through a wooded grove and up a small incline, there is a Memorial Sidewalk. Etched in the concrete slabs are dates from 1857 to 1907—commemorating the golden anniversary of the Epworth Methodist Seminary. Begun in

1857, the seminary stayed open until 1923, and then became a military academy. The academy closed in 1927. Thereafter, the property with eight buildings was put up for sale.

Archbishop Francis Beckman of Dubuque alerted the Society of the Divine Word to this sale, since he was aware that the Society was looking for a place to locate a seminary in Iowa. And so, in 1931 the Society of the Divine Word, headquartered at Techny, Illinois, purchased the Epworth property for \$16,000. The former military academy became St. Paul's Mission House, a minor seminary. Father Bruno Hagspiel was the provincial at the time, and Father Bernard Bonk, the province procurator or treasurer.

Prior to the purchase of this property, the Society of the Divine Word was already known in Iowa through the efforts of traveling Divine Word Brothers who came from Germany to distribute various mission-interest magazines to the German-speaking people in America. Brother Wendelin Meyer, the first Divine Word Missionary to come to America in 1895, was a key figure in this enterprise, especially in Iowa.

The seed of the Society's presence in the Midwest and subsequent vocations that followed was planted some years before the property was purchased at Epworth in 1931. Before opening the school for the first students, extensive remodeling had to be done to the existing buildings. Father Francis Humel, the first rector of St. Paul's Mission House, gave an account of the early days on the occasion of the golden anniversary of the arrival of the Society of the Divine Word at Epworth in 1981.

It was not many days later that Brother Benedict Vollmecke, an excellent carpenter and builder and a native of Iowa, and my brother, Father Anthony Humel, were appointed to proceed to Epworth and begin to put the buildings in first-class shape and prepare them for our purpose as a minor seminary. This was in late summer or early fall of 1931. Brother Gilbert Baumgartner was appointed to look after the financial office.

Though not mentioned in Father Humel's account, Brother Henry Oeser came to inspect the heating system and then returned to Techny where he was much needed. He would return to Epworth to take

over general maintenance after the new seminary college building was erected in 1964.

To continue Father Humel's account:

Brother Benedict began his task at once assisted a little by my brother, who soon began to form ladies clubs: one in each of the towns of Epworth, Farley and Dyersville. We will always owe a deep sense of gratitude to these groups. They came each week for a day and helped in countless ways in the work, making bed sheets, pillow cases and comforters for each bed along with curtains for the windows.

According to Father Humel's write-up, the relationship with the people of Epworth, mainly Methodists, though strained at first, improved in time, aided by the gym fire incident:

Of all possible times, the fire started Christmas morning shortly after eleven. The Methodist Christmas service began at that time. When the fire alarm bell sounded, out of their service they came running to put out the fire. None of them took it amiss that they had to put out that Catholic fire on Christmas morning. Everyone became friendly from then on. But were we embarrassed!

After narrating the coming of Sisters from Austria to do the cooking and laundry and preparing a convent for them and describing Brother Benedict's bell tower and rustic bridge connecting the convent to the administration building, Father Humel continues:

The greatest worry of that first summer and first year was the financial one. It was during the middle of the Great Depression. We had no list of friends and benefactors. The SVD Community and the number of students began with close to seventy people. We were informed by Father Bonk, the province procurator, that on the first of July we would be on our own.

So, we opened the place officially on July 1 with many worries. The students came the first week of September 1932. In those days many a business folded up and those who were still going demanded payment of bills in thirty days. We tried everything those first months. Besides starting a raffle, we advertised for private loans and most of all the community prayed. It was a matter of doing all we could and leaving the rest to Divine Providence which did not fail us. Gradually all our creditors were satisfied.

Another worry was our food supply. Things were exceptionally cheap during the depression, e.g. eggs were eight cents a dozen. Brother Benedict, using a half-ton Ford truck, donated by the grandfather of one of the students, would drive to northern Iowa among relatives and friends and always came back loaded to the top with meat and vegetables. The Iowa farmers had no cash but their food supplies were abundant.

St. Paul's Mission House began the school year in September 1932 with eight priests, five Brothers, and 58 students. The following made up the Divine Word community: Fathers Francis Humel, rector; Theodore Koeller, assistant; Anthony May, administrator; John Moenster, Herman Hagen, Florian Haas, Anthony Humel and Stephen Appelhans; and Brothers Laurence Millendorf, Benedict Vollmecke, Mark Ruane, Egilhardus Kreitz and Gilbert Baumgartner.

Shortly after school began, the new seminary was dedicated on October 30, 1932, at 3 p.m. on the Feast of Christ the King. Archbishop Francis Beckman of Dubuque did the blessing and Msgr. John Mark Wolfe of the Propagation of the Faith delivered the sermon. All the priests of the archdiocese were invited as well as the various religious Sisters and the members of the ladies' clubs. An outdoor altar was erected. "All in all," writes Father Humel, "it was a grand day in every way, a day that seemed to foretell God's richest blessing on the future of the Society of the Divine Word in the Dubuque Archdiocese."



The students with the rector in 1932.

The class that began in the fall of 1932—made up of students transferred from the minor seminary at Techny—came from Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. They graduated on June 14, 1935. A number of them would go on to become the large ordination class of 1944, receive their mission crosses, and be sent to worldwide mission countries. Father John Harpel, a member of that class of '35, missionary in Ghana, West Africa, for many years, was still active at age 92 as chaplain in the hospital in New Hampton, Iowa. Father Bartley Schmitz, another member of that class, continues to reside in Taiwan well into his 90s.

St. Paul's Mission House in Epworth, Iowa, continued as a minor seminary until June 1949.

THE JUNIORATE

In September 1949 St. Paul's Mission House became the "Juniorate"—a two-year liberal arts college for Divine Word seminarians in temporary vows. Graduates from the minor seminaries in East Troy, Wisconsin, and Girard, Pennsylvania, after completing their novitiate at Techny, would take their first two years of college at Epworth.



Students and Faculty in 1952.

Students from Miramar, Massachusetts, and Bordentown, New Jersey, who completed their novitiate at Conesus, New York, also came to Epworth for two years of college education. During the years 1949–1955, the enrollment was quite high.

Because of the large enrollment, a prefabricated dormitory was built next to the administration building under the supervision of Charles Russell, a seminarian from Australia, with the help of some of his classmates. The Juniorate at Epworth ended in 1955, when the class of 1954, on completing the first year, was transferred to the summer residence on the shore of Lake Gogebic on Michigan's Upper Peninsula to finish their second year and to work at developing the property – clearing brush, building a bridge, laying paths, creating a ball field, etc.

The move was part of Father Lawrence Mack's dream to see if students could be housed at Gogebic throughout the winter months. At the end of the year, the students at Gogebic went on to join the other Epworth alumni at Techny for philosophy. The experiment at Gogebic was not repeated for a second year.

INTERIM YEARS

The buildings at Epworth were used as a “belated vocation” school—that is, a school for young men from various high schools

who had no Latin, which at that time was a requirement for higher studies in philosophy and theology. This lasted for only two years. The additional dormitory building put up in 1952 came in handy when Silker's, a convenience store in Epworth, burned down on December 6, 1957. The Divine Word community offered the Silker family the use of the dormitory building until they rebuilt their store in 1959.

A few confreres, who remained to look after the property at Epworth during the late-1950s, lived in the administration building. The other buildings stood empty.

PLANS IN THE MAKING

In October 1959, meetings were held at Techny (with Superior General Father Johannes Schütte present) concerning the accreditation of our seminaries. Also being considered were questions of where to locate the various houses of formation, especially where to establish a new four-year college seminary. Mr. Ernest Brandewie, author of *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries of North America*, gives an account of this process:

With the principle of pursuing accreditation quickly accepted, much discussion in the October 1959 meeting took up the problem of where the various units would be placed, with participants from existing units plumping for their own place as the ideal spot for this or that enterprise: novitiate, junior college, school for belated vocations, and the college and philosophy programs for professed seminarians. Again the question of the timing and the length of the novitiate came up. All this had a profound effect on future formation.¹

As the result of continuing discussions, it seemed logical to locate the college nearer the center of the country, thus making the distance students would have to travel from the South and the West more manageable. The decision was made to build a college seminary at Epworth, Iowa.

DIVINE WORD COLLEGE SEMINARY

Groundbreaking for the new college took place one warm July day in 1962 with Father Nicholas Bisheimer, provincial of the Northern



The new Divine Word College under construction.

Province, on hand to turn over the first shovel of dirt. The cornerstone was laid in 1963. The architect was Brielmair, Sheer and Sheer, out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. J.P. Cullen and Sons, of Janesville, Wisconsin, was the builder. Brother Richard (William) Krick was the construction supervisor.

The college was built south of the former Juniorate. The former buildings plus the Agony in the Garden Grotto built by Brother Fridolin Iten in 1934 were eventually torn down, except for the administration building, which was named Megan Hall—after Monsignor Thomas Megan from Eldora, Iowa. Monsignor Megan had been a missionary in China and was Prefect Apostolic of Xianxiang. Later he was active in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, before his death in 1951.

Mr. Brandewie writes,

In September 1964, Epworth opened its doors again as a completely new and impressive facility. In the fall of 1965 the newly professed class of novices that had begun their novitiate at Conesus, New York in 1963, the class that had begun their novitiate in 1964, and the class that would have begun novitiate at Conesus in 1965, all converged on Epworth in one fell swoop overwhelming the brand new edifice's living facility and making Father Edward Norton's



The old administration building was renamed Megan Hall.

longtime vision of a single, united four-year college in one place [a reality]. Critics, however, would answer with the question: “But why in the cornfields of Iowa?” To which the classic response was, “The majority of Divine Word Missionaries will work in rural environs. Much of their education should take place in similar circumstances.”²

Father Edward Norton, who had a doctorate in education from the University of Chicago, devoted his life to education and played a very important role in the accreditation of our seminaries.

The first president of Divine Word College Seminary was Father Edward Dudink (1964–1970). He was also the first rector of the Divine Word community (1964–1970) and the prefect (dean of students) from 1964–1965.

The first vice president of academic affairs was Father Matthew Jacoby (1964–1965), followed by Father Charles Malin (1965–1980). Father Malin also played an important role in the accreditation of our seminaries.

The enrollment of Divine Word College Seminary in 1965 was 61. In 1966 it jumped to 141 and reached a high point of 182 in 1967. Accreditation with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools was granted in April 1970 and renewed as required every five-to-ten years. The last renewal was in 2005.

Degrees Given at Divine Word College

From 1964 to 1992

- BA English, English literature, sociology, sociology/history, sociology/psychology, sociology/anthropology, social science, general science, philosophy, theology, history, humanities, fine arts, art, music
- BS Mathematics, mathematics and science, general science, biology, general science with mathematics concentration, general science with computer science concentration
- AA Mission preparedness (now an AA in intercultural studies)

From the 1993–1994 academic year to the present

Only two majors are offered: philosophy and intercultural studies

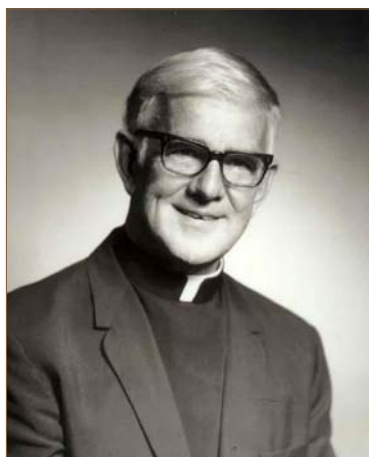
THE EARLY YEARS

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the Vietnam War had a significant impact on the seminary. The March 24, 1966, issue of *Witness*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, featured an article titled, “Seminary Aggiornamento,” in which Father Dudink related the significance of “aggiornamento updating” and what effect it was having and would have on the formation process in the college seminary:

Most of the things we have done so far, such as allowing the seminarians greater liberty in regulating their own lives and a greater access to the cultural life around them, are considered only minor changes. When viewed as a whole, they are important in their own way, but surely do not represent the heart of seminary renewal.

Further on, he said:

We have really only begun the work of updating our seminary. Work on the two largest areas under consideration for renewal is moving ahead but at a slower pace. The first of these is the need for greater organic unity throughout the entire spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and disciplinary aspects



Father Edward Dudink, president 1964-1970.

of the formation program. The second is to make the whole experience more personal. . . . We are attempting to renovate life in the seminary according to sound psychological and evangelical principles which include the sharing by our students of a larger variety of human experiences and more contact with their families and the outside world, allowing them to really be themselves, making it possible for them to make mistakes and to help them internalize the entire training program in an atmosphere of human warmth and understanding.

According to Father Edward Herberger, dean of students (1973–1976), a committee was eventually set up to formulate a formation program. The committee, chaired by Father Adrian Fuerst, a Benedictine monk of St. Meinrad's Archabbey in Indiana, met for two days every month for a year. The outcome was the formulation of the Christian Development Program.³ Student groups moderated by a priest or a Brother centered on growth in four vital areas: personal, social, spiritual, and vocational. During this new era of seminary training, members of the administration and faculty also needed to be updated in order to address and resolve conflicts arising over various viewpoints in conducting the college seminary. Some members were in

favor of Divine Word Missionaries taking the “Marathon”—a psychological method of opening up to one another so as to better relate and work together. No one was forced to make the Marathon, nor was everyone suited to do so.

In the wake of Vatican II and the Vietnam War, a number of issues surfaced, such as the hippie movement, the black power movement, the civil rights movement, and the antiwar protests. Addressing these issues caused some turbulent sailing in a post-Vatican II college seminary. But the process of addressing these issues within the context of the Christian Development Program helped bring about positive results in the personal, social, spiritual and vocational lives of the students.

APOSTOLIC MINISTRIES

One of the positive results of the education / formation program was to give the students an opportunity to visit various places like nursing homes or hospitals not only to spend some time with the sick and elderly but also to develop their own social skills, assessing how they related in these situations. Others taught religion in grade schools or went to parishes to help with the liturgy. Those involved in apostolic ministries were commissioned for the task during a special chapel service. Spring break activities gave the students opportunities to go out on location to carry out some form of apostolic service. Dramatic plays and musicals, open to the public, were often staged in collaboration with actresses from the local communities and from Clarke College (now a university) in Dubuque. Among some of the musicals were: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Pippin*.

In 1969 (September 1968, according to Father Edward Herberger), junior Brothers in temporary vows began attending Divine Word College Seminary at Epworth. The expectation grew that Brothers would receive full secondary education either in technical areas or in bachelor's and graduate degree programs.⁴ Father Herberger, Director of Brother Formation, also felt that they needed more theology than merely the catechism lessons they were getting. Furthermore, they badly needed some cross-cultural training to prepare them better for overseas missionary work.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

1981 marked the golden anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word at Epworth in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa. Events began with Mission Sunday weekend on October 17–18, followed by William Burrows’ lecture on November 8. From November 19–21 there was a dramatic presentation of *Damien*, the life of Father Damien De Veuster of Molokai. The closing of the Golden Jubilee Year was held on November 22. Francis Dunn, auxiliary bishop of Dubuque, was the main celebrant at Mass, and Father Donald Skerry was the homilist.

ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Trustees came into being in 1967, with the incorporation of the college. Over the years some alumni of Divine Word College have served on the board. A prominent member of the board, Thomas Melady (1973–1977), later served as U.S. Ambassador to Burundi, to the U.S. delegation at the United Nations, to Uganda and to the Holy See. The board of administration headed by the president of the college is made up of the following vice presidents: academic affairs, formation/dean of students, recruitment and admissions, financial affairs, development, and the librarian.

Presidents of Divine Word College	
Father Edward Dudink	1964–1970
Father Harold Rigney	1970–1973
Father Louis Luzbetak	1973–1978
Father Raymond Quetchenbach	1978–1981
Father John Donaghey	1981–1987
Father Joseph Simon	1987–1993
Father Michael Hutchins	1993–2011
Father Timothy Lenchak	2011–

Vice President of Formation/Dean of Students	
Father Edward Dudink	1964–1965
Father John Donaghey	1965–1970
Father Edward Herberger	1970–1973
Father Gary Riebe-Estrella	1973–1976
Father Stephen Ernest	1976–1978
Father Edward Peklo	1978–1984
Brother Bernard Spitzley	1984–1990
Brother Gerald [Bruno] Burr	1990
Father Joseph Tri Van Vu	1990–1996
Father Quang Duc Dinh	1996–2001
Father Augustine Wall	2001–2005
Father Khien Luu	2005–2013
Father Cong Bang Tran	2013–

Vice President of Academic Affairs	
Father Matthew Jacoby	1964–1965
Father Charles Malin	1965–1980
Father John Donaghey	1980–1981
Father Joseph Simon	1981–1987
Father Michael Hutchins	1987–1989
Father James Braband	1989–1991
Brother Douglas Edmonds	1991–1993
Father Kenneth Anich	1993–2003
Brother John Wozniak, FSC	2003–2006
Dr. James Russet	2006–2009
Dr. Mathew Kanjiranthinkal	2010–

Worthy of special mention is Father Harold Rigney, second president of Divine Word College, author of *Four Years in a Red Hell*, an account of his imprisonment under the Communists in China. The crypt below the college chapel is named Rigney Hall in his memory.

During the early years of the college, most if not all of the teachers were Divine Word Missionaries. Among them were Fathers William Fitzgibbons, Sylvester Jaworski, Joseph Simon and James Bergin. Through the years more laypeople were added to the faculty both as teachers at the college level and in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

As part of being an accredited educational institution, the college library was further developed in the early years by Father Matthew Jacoby. Other librarians were Fathers Gerald Gary and John Tra. In 1996 Mr. Daniel Boice became the first layman to fill the position as head librarian. Brother Anthony Kreinus came to the college as assistant librarian after the minor seminary at East Troy closed. The library contains more than 90,000 books, a well-maintained periodical room, a room of bound reference periodicals, CDs and DVDs. The library catalog is available online.

AFTERMATH OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The unrest on U.S. campuses during the Vietnam War also had an effect on Divine Word College. Vocations began to fall off, reaching a low of 58 students in 1974. Some community members wondered how long the college would be able to remain open. And then came the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the end of the war in Vietnam. That this faraway Asian event would profoundly influence the future of Divine Word College no one possibly could have foreseen! An account of this was written up by Brother Dennis Newton in a yearbook published by the Divine Word Missionaries.⁵

After speaking of the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the massive exodus of people fleeing the Communist regime, he writes:

Some estimate that as many as one-half perished in the sea. The rest made it to places such as Hong Kong and the Philippines, and many . . . eventually made it to the United States. One such group arrived in 1975 in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, their temporary home until they could be



Father Louis Luzbetak, president 1973-1978.

relocated. Among this group were a number of seminarians. Father Thomas Krosnicki, working at the time for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, was informed of these young men. He then contacted Father Joseph Francis, Provincial of the Southern Province (who in turn contacted Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa).

The action then shifted to Divine Word College, where Father Louis Luzbetak was president. He turned to Brother Patrick Hogan from Fu Jen Catholic University, the school operated by the Society of the Divine Word in Taiwan. He was a trained linguist and ESL teacher, who just happened to be at Epworth at the time. The decision was quickly made to offer the facilities at Epworth to the Vietnamese seminarians to begin to teach them English, so that they could pursue their vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the United States. Thus, Epworth, with an ESL program already in place, would serve as a bridge enabling the Vietnamese seminarians to enter seminary programs of their choice.



Father Joseph Tri Van Vu, one of the first Vietnamese students to attend the college in 1975, was Dean of Students, 1990-1996.

According to Father Luzbetak's reasoning, the benefits of this program would be mutual:

The Vietnamese program is an idea that has come upon us unexpectedly. It offers an opportunity to be missionaries in the truest sense of the word right here in our own backyard. It can also help the missionary spirit in our community. There are risks, and they should not be minimized, but I feel the risks are worth taking.⁶

From this initiative taken by Divine Word College in 1975, vocations to the Society of the Divine Word began to grow as the Vietnamese refugee seminarians became acquainted with the Society. The number of students rose to 106 in 1979. The enrollment kept steady until the 1990s when it began to drop again. One reason for the decline, perhaps, was that the source of vocations, once nurtured in Vietnam and further developed in the United States, was drying up, and new generations born in the United States were not responding as readily to a priestly or religious call.

In addition to the Vietnamese seminarians who became members of the Society of the Divine Word, more than 30 Vietnamese alumni of Divine Word College transferred to diocese or other religious orders in the United States. So, the college has been of service to the wider Church.

VOCATION PROMOTION AND RECRUITMENT

Over the years the Society of the Divine Word has spared no expense in personnel and finance for vocation promotion and recruitment. In the 1950s, the Future Priest Club was started and thrived. A Future Brother Club followed. Many candidates for our minor seminaries came from these groups. Many religious Sisters teaching in parochial schools promoted both clubs. Father Kenneth Reed, Divine Word national vocation director, had a list of Sisters who actively promoted the Society and supplied the needed vocational materials.

In the 1970s, the national office was moved to Divine Word College in Epworth with Father Frederick Rudolph as national director. Father Thomas Streveler coordinated the college vocation program with the help of nine regional recruiters. Father Herberger followed. In 2003 Mr. Len Uhal, a 1987 graduate of Divine Word College, became the first layman to head the national vocation office. A number of newly ordained priests, graduates of Divine Word College, have served in this vital work of vocation promotion and recruitment. Among the most recent are Fathers Quy Dang, Trung Mai, Joseph Chau Nguyen, Antonio Romo-Romo and Adam MacDonald.

Starting in the early 1990s a number of young men from the Caribbean have been attending Divine Word College to prepare them for lay ministry in the Caribbean. In 2010 the first young woman from Jamaica enrolled in the college's lay ministry program.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF DIVINE WORD COLLEGE SEMINARY

On Mission Sunday in October 1989, the Divine Word community together with friends and benefactors celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Divine Word College Seminary, built in 1964. Daniel Kucera OSB, archbishop of Dubuque, was the celebrant at the Mass. Father Raymond Lennon, provincial of the Chicago Province, was the homilist.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

During the 2000s a few developments occurred that affected the college. In 2000, French students from the Institut Catholique d'Etudes Superieures (ICES) in La Roche-sur Yon, south of Nantes in the western part of France, began coming to Divine Word College for ten weeks during the second semester to study political science. Brother Patrick Hogan, who had an important role in the establishment of the ESL program at Divine Word College, also played a role in this "French Connection." Dr. Francois Bouletreau, general director of ICES, had previously sent students to study Chinese at Fu Jen University, the school operated by the Society of the Divine Word in Taiwan. ICES students did well there under the guidance of Brother Pat. When Dr. Bouletreau began looking for a school in the United States where his students might study U.S. culture, politics, and English, he consulted Brother Pat, who recommended Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa.

Dr. Bouletreau eventually visited Epworth, and Divine Word College President Father Michael Hutchins visited La Roche on two occasions. Each group of students from France that attended Divine Word College had its own personality and ability to relate with the other students. The groups in 2010 and in 2011 prepared Sunday supper one evening, providing the community with a touch of France.

THE "LOST BOYS" OF SUDAN

From 2000-2008, 36 Sudanese refugees known as the Lost Boys of Sudan arrived at Divine Word College. While a few of them graduated,



Joseph Tuok, 2011 graduate.

most of them went on to seek other pursuits. Most notably, Joseph Okello was elected president of the student body in 2011.

The Sudanese have added much to the intercultural living at Divine Word College, making the college and local communities more aware of the atrocities that have taken place in Sudan and bringing to light the life of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was sold into slavery, tortured, and eventually found freedom in Italy. There she became a religious Sister.

Prior to the Sudanese attending Divine Word College, seven religious Brothers from Uganda had studied at the college between 1986 and 1990. Four of them belonged to the Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga.

CHANGE IN MISSION

Despite the influx of new students during the middle part of the 1990s, enrollment again began to drop. Out of this period came perhaps the defining change to the college during the presidency of Father Michael Hutchins—the decision to expand the student body and welcome students other than Divine Word seminarians, a move that would eventually mean a change in the college’s mission statement.

It began with the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS).⁷ Province Leader Sister Judith Vallimont promoted the idea of having their Sisters attend Divine Word College. A house was bought near the college on Seminary Avenue, and in August 2006, four Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters enrolled in Divine Word College.

Their presence was transformative. They fit in well, and their success in integrating with the college community inspired the college to extend enrollment opportunities to other religious orders in Vietnam. The first three Vietnamese Sisters arrived in 2008. Twenty-three would join in 2009. Megan Hall, which formerly had housed the pre-novitiate class, became their residence.

In addition to the Sisters, diocesan priests, monks, seminarians from other orders and laypersons from Divine Word parishes now attend Divine Word College. Holy Spirit Missionary Sister Ana Julita Bele Bau from Timor, Indonesia, was the first Sister to graduate from Divine Word College in 2011.

Previously, Patricia Ann Cline of Dubuque had been the first female graduate of Divine Word College in 1989. She enrolled through the Father Joseph Simon scholarship.



Sister Ana Julita Bela Bau, 2011 graduate.

Because of the increased enrollment, two houses in Epworth were purchased to accommodate the pre-novitiate class and laypersons—one on First Street and the other on Center Avenue.

MISSION STATEMENT

In 2009 this new mission statement for Divine Word College was put into effect:

*Divine Word College, a Roman Catholic seminary in the tradition
of the Society of the Divine Word,
educates men and women for missionary service
as priests, brothers, sisters, and laypersons.*

*For this purpose, we offer an education that combines spiritual formation,
a liberal arts curriculum, language learning and mission preparation
within an environment that teaches and honors
the rich cultural diversity of the world.*

*This spiritual, academic, and experiential preparation
serves the particular learning skills of our students,
promotes their development as whole and responsible persons
and fosters a lifelong commitment to serving God's people.*

OTHER INITIATIVES

During the presidency of Father Michael Hutchins (1993–2011), a number of new initiatives were begun. The Divine Word College Board of Trustees became an entry point for improving public awareness of the college. The board became stronger and more diversified, with capable and dedicated members possessing various areas of expertise.

Three of the college's most successful efforts to reach out to the general public were the Community Relations Council, Spring Brunch, and the FAN Club. In May 1994, at Father Hutchins' suggestion, the Development Committee of the Board of Trustees advanced the idea of forming a Development Council to raise awareness of the college with area residents and to help in fund-raising. By April 1995, it had become the Community Relations Council (CRC), whose purpose was to raise awareness of the college through person-to-person contact, help develop relationships between students and area residents, find ways for DWC to contribute to the area, and encourage local support for the college.

The key fund-raising event of the CRC, the annual Spring Brunch, can trace its roots to April 1995. A great friend of Divine Word College, Monsignor Raymond J. Wahl—then pastor of St. Michael's Church in Galena, Illinois, and a member of the newly formed CRC—suggested and helped form a fund-raising event called the Spring Brunch. This annual affair filled the gym with 400 or more area residents who came to enjoy the food, bid on auction items donated by generous individuals and local businesses, and buy tickets to win raffle prizes. In 2010 the event raised \$43,000.

In January 1996 the CRC addressed one of its main purposes, to “help develop relationships between students and area residents,” when it initiated the Friends Across Nations, or as it is called, the FAN Club. It provides a wonderful opportunity for the international students of Divine Word College to learn more about local culture and get the TLC (tender, loving care) that only a family can provide. In turn, the host families are greatly enriched by the native land experiences of the students. It is one more part of the intercultural living that is a hallmark of Divine Word College.

During his presidency, Father Hutchins suggested the establishment of the Matthew 25 Award, which recognizes people for work that reflects the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 25: “I was hungry and



The Powers, a FAN Club family, with college students.

you fed me. . . .” In 2001 Sister Paula Schwendinger, PBVM, daughter of John Schwendinger, Epworth town historian, was the first recipient of the award. Recipients must be connected to the area community and minister to those who live at the margins of society.

Another sign of recognition was the establishment of the Donaghey Award, named after Father John Donaghey, dean of students (1965–1970) and president of Divine Word College (1981–1987). This award is given to local residents who are of service to the college whether through financial assistance or giving of their time to help students in a variety of ways. The first recipients in 1999 were a Vietnamese couple from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Mr. and Mrs. Do Van Nguyen. The Silker brothers of Epworth—Steve, Wayne, Phil, and Larry—were the recipients in 2006 for their service to the Epworth community as well as to the college. They own and manage a general convenience store, handling almost everything with a motto: “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”

The arts, cultural events, and lectures were disparate entities in 1993. During his presidency, Father Hutchins reorganized cultural



Sandy Jenkins speaks after she and husband Joe received the 2013 Donaghey Award from Father Timothy Lenchak.

events including the art gallery, lecture series, and concerts. He put them under the title, “Arts Alive.” Most events are open to the surrounding communities, with only a free-will donation requested.

Two other events of social outreach to the local communities are Mission Sunday and Lunar New Year. The first event centers around an afternoon liturgy incorporating readings, songs, and liturgical dances of various countries that our students represent. After the liturgy all are invited to the gymnasium for a sampling of various cultural dishes that students, faculty, staff and Divine Word community members prepare.

Lunar New Year, which takes place in late-January or early-February, has grown over the years. In the 1970s, when the first Vietnamese refugees came to Divine Word College, they gathered with a few friends in the student lounge. Now, forty years later, after an inspirational and grace-filled liturgy in the college chapel, hundreds of friends and neighbors gather in a nicely decorated gymnasium to enjoy a banquet of Asian dishes, followed by entertainment prepared by the students.

During the presidency of Father Hutchins, a number of scholarships were endowed and awarded to students who displayed excellence in their studies or were of service to the community. The scholarships, named after prominent Divine Word Missionaries or a lay person



The Lunar New Year Celebration.

who has assisted the college, honor Bishop Curtis Guillory; Fathers Robert Flinn, Chester Nowicki and Francis Kamp; and Mr. Alfred E. Hughes, who provided legal services to the College for many years. The endowed awards are named the Brother Leonard Bauer Service Award, the St. Arnold Janssen Award for Oral Presentation, and the Father Charles Malin Award for Excellence in Teaching, given to a teacher or professor each year at graduation.

FINANCES AND DEVELOPMENT

Running, maintaining, staffing, and financing Divine Word College takes the collaborative effort of many dedicated, talented individuals. Over the years the Society of the Divine Word has been blessed with capable administrators and financiers. In the Chicago Province finance office, Fathers Arthur Melcher, Chester Nowicki and Dariusz Garbaciak have funded the building and operation of the college. It is a huge investment but one the Province believes worthwhile.

Brother Leonard Bauer took over the business office in 1964. Besides taking care of the finances and writing numerous letters, he would respond to visitors' needs at the college entrance, visit residents and shut-ins in the Epworth community, and make himself available in many ways. A deeply religious man, imbued with God's love, he was

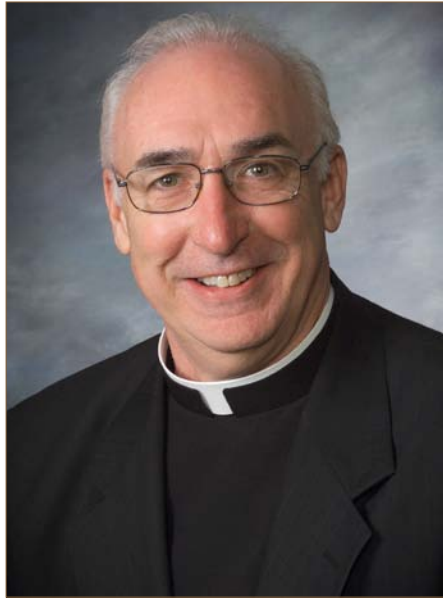
well known and loved at the college and in the local community. On May 12, 1990, on his golden anniversary of religious profession, he received an honorary Doctor of Letters, *Honoris Causa*, for his great contribution to the success of the college.

As business manager Brother Leonard hired three young ladies to help in the office. He picked good ones. After thirty-plus years of faithful service, they are still working at DWC. Marlene Decker is one. After morning chores on the family farm, Marlene is at the college bright and early working in the business office. Like the proverbial postal carrier, nothing—rain, snow, nor sleet—can stop her from getting to work. Caroline Waechter takes diligent care of student immigration concerns and dental/medical needs. Donna Puccio has been the secretary to seven presidents and is a wellspring of pertinent college information concerning the history and operation of the college.

Wilhelm “Willie” Eck became the first layman to head the business office. Linda Wiedemann of Dubuque succeeded him as vice president of financial affairs. When Linda retired, Mr. Mark Pasker took over. Part of the Chicago Province mission statement—“Inviting Collaboration in Mission”—truly finds fulfillment in these remarkable men and women.

Father Robert Jones headed the development office in the 1970s. Father Joseph Simon assisted with development while he was the president of the college (1987–1993). He also taught history. Father Joseph McDermott of Bankston, Iowa, on his return to the United States after his many years in Papua New Guinea, helped in vocation promotion and in the development office. Brother Wayne Till, after years in New Guinea and Australia, assists in the development office. Father James Heiar from Springbrook, Iowa, after some years in the Philippines, came to Divine Word College to head the Development Office for nearly ten years. The first layperson to head the Development Office was Mr. Bob Morrissey. Mr. Mark Singsank from Dyersville, Iowa, followed him. More recently, Mr. Terry Sykora became the vice president for development. Coming on board near the end of Father Hutchins’ presidency, he had this to say about Father Hutchins:

One of Father Hutchins’ most notable legacies has been his effort to build the Divine Word College endowment from \$2 million in 1993 to \$20 million in 2010–2011. This has



Father Michael Hutchins, president 1993-2011.

been accomplished through the discipline of saving rather than spending contributions from donors' estates and by consistent, prudent investing of those gifts.

Under his leadership, the college has built another kind of endowment, a "living endowment," which consists of the thousands of charitable gifts our living donors made from year to year, totaling roughly \$1 million annually in recent years. These are funds the college uses immediately to support the most important priorities it faces each year. They are a living endowment in the sense that the college would require an additional \$20 million in endowment to produce the \$1 million. These funds are targeted each year towards various projects to help maintain the physical structure and upkeep of the college. All of this points to the college's willingness and ability to generate funds so as to rely less on the Province's financial aid.

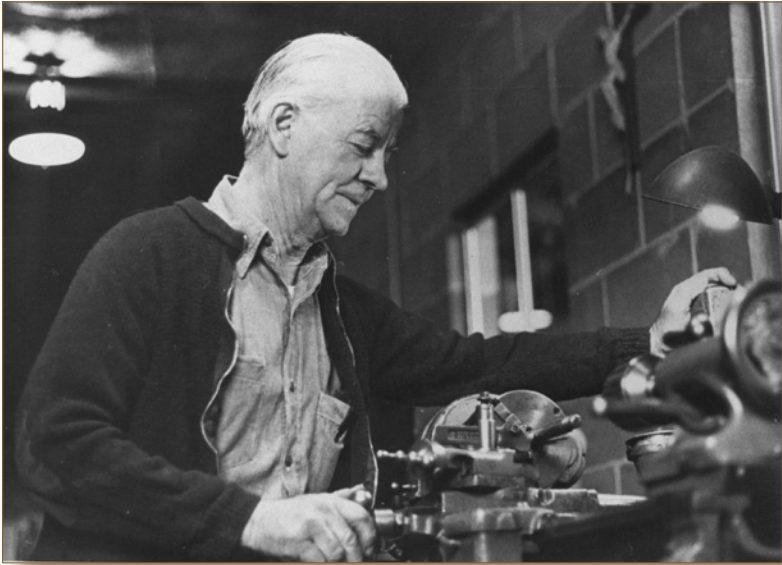
The Vietnamese outreach is a part of the development program headed by Father Linh Duy Pham and assisted by Mr. Hai Tran, a 2000 graduate of Divine Word College. Over the years the number of Vietnamese benefactors has grown, together with their loyalty to the college and its goals. We at the college are most grateful to them.

Each year on All Souls Day, November 2, friends and benefactors who have lost loved ones in the current year are invited to Divine Word College to celebrate a memorial Mass in their honor. After Mass, they are cordially invited to the dining area for coffee, juice, and rolls and to spend time with friends and family, sharing their stories not only of pain and loss but also of thanks for blessings received.

The buildings that make up the Divine Word College campus have been well maintained through the years. In 2014 Divine Word College Seminary will be fifty years old, but as someone remarked,

“The buildings look recently built.” Much of this is due to the watchful eye of Brother Richard (William) Krick at the time of construction. John Schwendinger, Epworth town historian, wrote of Brother Richard, “As a construction supervisor he was at his best. He was meticulous and had a built-in sense of design. His brilliant mind won the respect of everyone with whom he worked.”⁸

Besides fiscal responsibility, fund-raising, and endowments, there are those who have been and are part of the physical maintenance of the college. Brother Henry Oeser was one of them. As mentioned previously, he came from Techny in 1931 to check the boilers and the heating system of St. Paul’s Mission House when the Society of the Divine Word acquired the property. He did not stay long, since he was needed at Techny. He returned to Epworth when the new four-year college was being built in 1963–1964 and stayed on to take care of general maintenance for nearly thirty years. In 1991, during his sixtieth anniversary as a Divine Word Brother, his years of faithful service were well remembered and celebrated. Besides his work at the college, he accompanied Brother Leonard on their visits to local residents, especially the shut-ins. With Brother Ambrose Kurkawski he also liked to go fishing. Of Brother Ambrose it was said, “He was a fountain of humor around the reception desk. He was a tall George Burns without a cigar.”⁹



Brother Henry Oeser was in charge of maintenance for more than 30 years.

As age caught up with Brother Henry, Mr. Clarence Urbain was hired to assist him. In 1983 Mr. Jim Callahan took Clarence's place and then was joined by Mr. John Osweiler. They formed a great team, carrying on the spirit of Brother Henry.

THE DIVINE WORD COMMUNITY

Those engaged in formation and education should be conscious that they accompany those entrusted to them on their way to Christ. . . . They must be attuned to the Holy Spirit and so be able to share their faith experience for the benefit of others. The more their words are borne out by their deeds, the greater will be their influence. . . . The success of formation depends on the trusting and purposeful cooperation of all concerned. Thus they should form a close community among themselves and those entrusted to them. (Constitutions 521, 522)

The Divine Word members—priests and Brothers—who have staffed Divine Word College from its very beginning form a tapestry of many colored strands. Those who attended St. Paul's Mission House,

the juniorate, or Divine Word College Seminary can sit back and muse on a colorful weave of characters—dedicated men who tried to live out the constitutions and be a source of inspiration and role models for all who came under their influence.

During the early days, only members of the Society of the Divine Word staffed and taught at St. Paul’s Mission House and the juniorate. Even when the new four-year college began, most of the teachers and professors were Divine Word Missionaries. In addition to their administrative and teaching duties, they were available on weekends to help at neighboring parishes, nursing homes, and in other assignments, and to be of service for the surrounding communities.

Others took on different, interesting tasks. Father Joseph Simon was involved in civic affairs of Epworth; he even ran for mayor. In his summer leisure moments he umpired baseball games. Having been a baseball catcher in his seminary days, he developed a good eye for balls and strikes. Of course, some batters questioned that.

Father Robert Jones, while working in the Development Office, volunteered to be the chaplain for the Epworth Fire Department. Years later, he has kept in touch with some of the firemen and their families. Other members, such as Fathers James Bergin and Edward Peklo, took part in Marriage Encounter, as did Fathers Robert Jones, Gilbert Gawlik and Stephen Ernest.

Father Joseph McDermott visited the sick, attended wakes and funerals of friends and benefactors, and was on hand to assist in whatever capacity he was able. Father Matthew Jacoby gave the neighborhood children swimming lessons in the college’s indoor swimming pool. The residents of Epworth, who helped pay for the pool’s heating system, use the pool. Many of the children, now adults with families of their own, remember Father Jacoby well. The road just below the college is named Jacoby Drive.

Father William Shea, onetime rector, assistant dean of students, and teacher of world history at Divine Word College—inspired no doubt by Brother Henry, who prayed each day for the end of abortion—leads the students in the pro-life movement. He also faithfully prepares the lectors for the Eucharistic celebrations.

Father Walter Bunofsky can be heard on Radio Dubuque KDTH 1370 AM each morning with short scriptural reflections, *The Living Word for Today*.

The campus grounds themselves do a service to the area just by being here. Some of the trees that grace the property date back to the time of the Epworth Methodist Seminary and St. Paul's Mission House. Though nature's winds and storms through the years have damaged some of them, others stand tall and majestic. When the new four-year college was built, the landscape was taken care of by Brothers Charles Reckamp and Vincent Keller from the Techny nursery and Brother Leonard Bauer at the college. A young Brother Kevin Diederich helped them. After spending some years in Papua New Guinea, he returned to Epworth not only to see those young trees in full growth but also to plant new ones, prune others, and in general maintain the scenic grounds.

Over the years the facilities of Divine Word College have been used in a variety of ways: deanery meetings of the priests, deacons, and lay ministers of the Dubuque archdiocese, other small group meetings, and vocation promotion gatherings, to name a few. The 11 international flags that grace the front of the college are not only the national flags of the different countries of our students but also are a sign of welcome for all peoples.

Throughout the history of Divine Word College at Epworth, Iowa, there has been a footbridge at the center of the campus that serves as the landmark ever old, ever new symbolizing the many and varied steps and transitions made through the years. It connects Megan Hall, a part of which goes back to the early 1850s, with the new complex built in 1963–1964. The original rustic bridge built by Brother Benedict suffered damage through the years from storms, even a tornado, and was vandalized by misguided youth of the area. Periodically, it needed rebuilding. As the bridge, so too the presence of the Society of the Divine Word and Divine Word College Seminary at Epworth, Iowa, has gone through renovation and upkeep—its aim and purpose adapted to the times, reshaped to meet current needs. Whatever challenges face our tomorrows, we'll cross the bridge when we get there.



APPENDIX

Rectors (with year of appointment)

Father Francis Humel	1932
Father Adolph Noser	1934
Father Cletus Hodapp	1937
Father Matthew Braun	1940
Father Lawrence Walsh	1943
Father Nicholas Bisheimer	1949
Father Joseph Dearworth	1952
Father John Beemster	1955
Father Joseph Dearworth	1958 (praeses)
<i>No rector between 1958 and 1964</i>	
Father Edward Dudink	1964
Father Gerald Garry	1970
Father Joseph Simon	1975
Father Leonard Olivier	1976
Father Edward Tuohy	1982
Father James Heiar	1985
Father James Bergin	1987
Father Robert Kelly	1990
Father William Shea	1996
Brother Rodney Bowers	2002
Father James Bergin	2008
Father Simon Thoi Hoang	2014

NOTES

1. Ernest Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries in North America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 93. Hereafter noted as EB with page number.
2. EB, 97–98.
3. Chicago Province Archives.
4. EB, 173.
5. Dennis Newton, “Fort Chaffee Calling,” *Word in the World* (1995), 41–43.
6. EB, 356–57.
7. A Sisters’ community founded by St. Arnold Janssen, who also founded the Divine Word Missionaries.
8. *Dyersville Commercial*, March 15, 1979, “Overseer for DWC Construction: Brother William Krick . . . A Man to Remember,” by John Schwendinger.
9. *Dyersville Commercial*, November 12, 1981, “We’ll See Ya’ Later, Brother Ambrose” by John Schwendinger.